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SUBJECT: BELGIUM ARRESTS FOURTEEN SUSPECTED TERRORISTS

[¶1.](#) (U) Belgian police arrested December 11 fourteen terrorist suspects, according to press reporting. A total of 242 police officers conducted a series of sixteen raids in Brussels and one in the Francophone city of Liege. According to the Belgian prosecutors office, the suspects were linked to a Belgian Islamist group involved in training and fighting along the Pakistan border, and were in communication with important figures in Al Qaeda.

[¶2.](#) (U) In his press statement, Belgian Prosecutor Johan Delmulle said the target of the planned terrorist attack was unknown, but could have been in Pakistan, Afghanistan, or a European target, such as the December 11-12 European Union Summit being held in Brussels. Delmulle stated that one of the suspects had received a green light to carry out an operation, and had already said good-bye to his loved ones. The information that an attack of some sort was imminent, coupled with the start of the European Summit spurred the police to make the arrests.

[¶3.](#) (U) During the December 11 press conference, Brussels Police Director Glenn Audenart said the group had been identified a year ago. The federal prosecutor's office called the investigation one of the most important anti-terrorism operation in Belgium, claiming that it likely prevented an attack from being carried out in Brussels.

[¶4.](#) (U) One of the fourteen suspects arrested, Malika El-Aroud, runs several jihadist websites and is an icon in the radical Islamist community. She is the widow of one of the Belgian-nationals who committed suicide to kill Afghan General Massood's September 9, 2001.

[¶5.](#) (U) In a joint statement Justice Minister Jo Vanderuzen and Interior Minister Patrick Dewael congratulated the security services on a job well done. Referring to last December's terror alert, the two minister pointed out that today's arrests vindicated the security service assessment that a threat existed last year.

[¶6.](#) (U) Comment: Belgian Federal Police received some vindication today by making arrests after a year long investigation. The Federal Police were widely panned in the media and criticized for the heightened terrorist alert that canceled seasonal festivities last December. It turns out there was a reason for concern, as today's arrests show. It is now clear that Belgian authorities are able to investigate and pursue terrorists on Belgian soil.

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